



Keeping children engaged
in education by
#Thinking differently

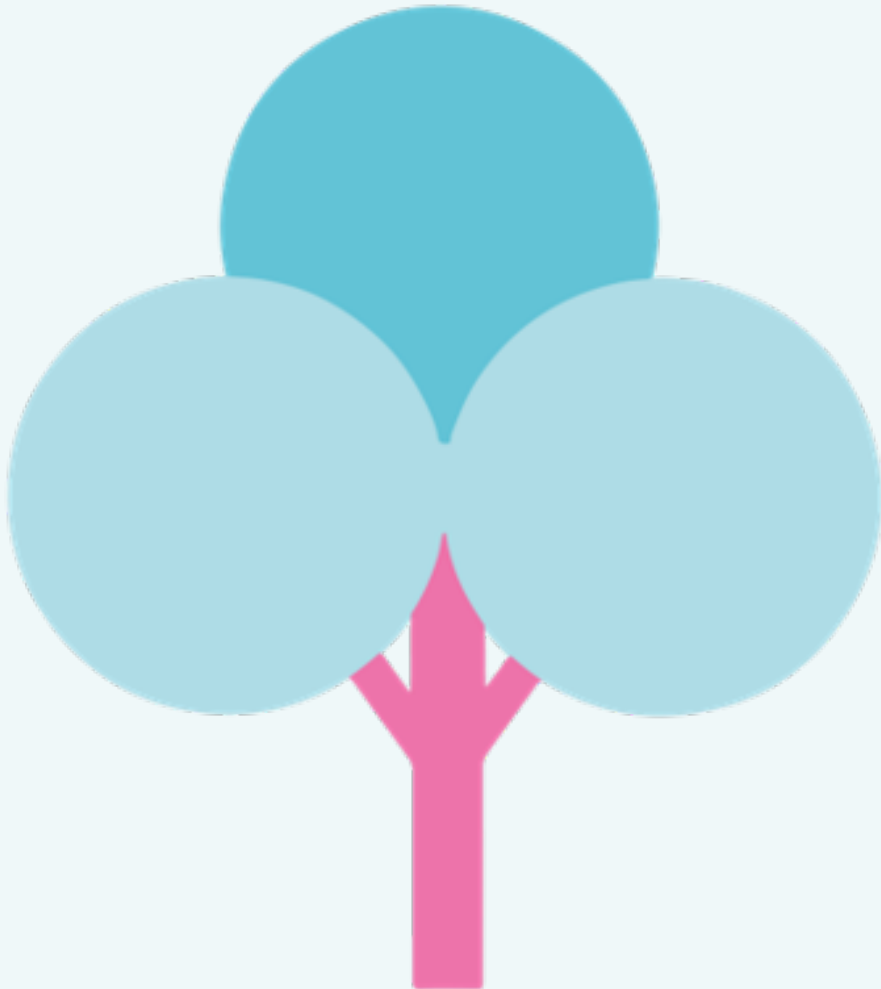
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Anna Freud
building the mental
wellbeing of the
next generation

Anna Freud



Anna Freud is a mental health charity and we've been supporting children and young people for over 70 years.

We listen to and learn from their diverse voices, and integrate this with learnings from our research and practice to develop and deliver mental health care.

Through our training, schools support, networks, partnerships and resources, we equip those who impact children and young people's lives with the knowledge and skills to support their mental health.

We strive for fairness and focus on equality of access to information and support for all. We proactively adjust our approach to help towards addressing the inequalities that exist in society today.



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Engagement and attendance

- Reflections on barriers to keeping children engaged and attending
- What helps or could help
- Changes we want to see at a local and national level



School attendance

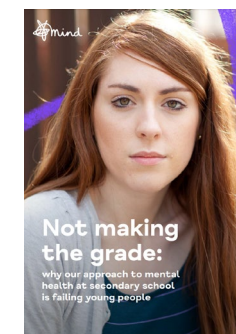
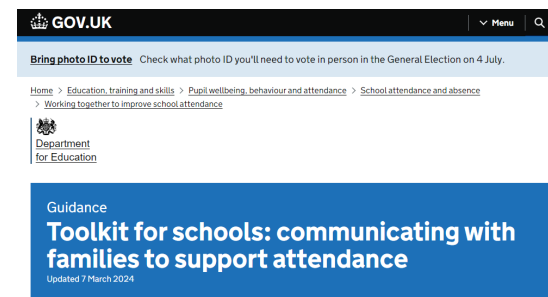
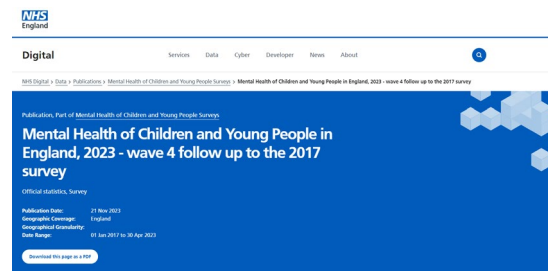
- Pupils with an identified SEN were more likely to be persistently absent than their peers.
- Data from NHS Digital highlights a link between school absence rates and mental health problems.
- Research from Mind: nearly seven in ten young people who participated reported being absent from school due to their mental health.
- Other factors include experience of poverty, housing insecurity, racism, discrimination, bullying, being care experienced or a young carer
- Parents are placing greater emphasis on their child's mental wellbeing. They have a greater awareness about the need to support children with these issues.

Benyon, K (2024) Pupil absence in Spring Term 2024, FFT education datalab

NHS Digital (2023) Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2023 - wave 4 follow up to the 2017 survey.

Mind (2021) Not making the grade. Available from: <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/8852/not-making-the-grade.pdf>

[Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/toolkit-for-schools-communicating-with-families-to-support-attendance) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)



School attendance

1. **Sense of school belonging is a key driver of attendance** across all contexts. This may be particularly important for girls or young women and is closely linked with **feeling safe at school**.
2. There is an emerging challenge of a **‘second transition’** from **Year 7 to Year 8** that deserves greater attention.
3. **Attendance drivers are intersectional**. Girls and young women who are eligible for Pupil Premium and have a special educational need are particularly likely to be low attending.
4. **Awareness of sanctions and consequences isn’t strongly linked to improved attendance**. Understanding of the importance of school and relationships with peers and teachers were more strongly associated with attendance.

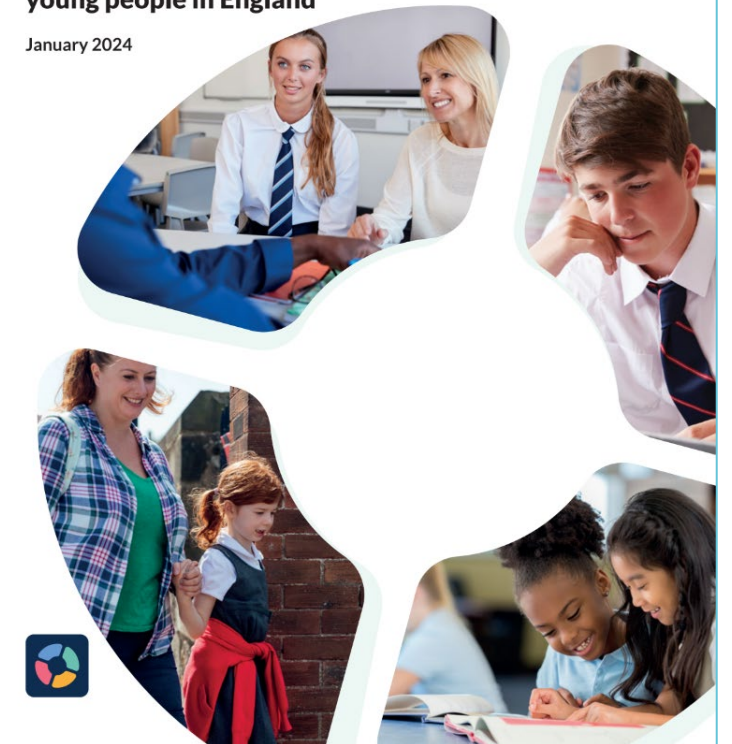
ImpactEd (2024), Understanding Attendance: Findings on the drivers of pupil absence from over 30,000 young people in England.



Understanding Attendance

Findings on the drivers of pupil absence from over 30,000 young people in England

January 2024



Anna Freud

Prevention: give young people a meaningful say

- Design, test and evaluation of prevention strategies.
- Partner with children and young people who have lived experience of mental ill health and come from backgrounds that are often overlooked or underserved.
- Cross-governmental task force to scrutinise the potential impacts of policy.

Focus on communities

- Community assets.
- Wider workforce training.
- Community-based early intervention e.g. Family hubs.
- Community-led early interventions for marginalised groups.
- Collect, analyse and act on local data.

Adopt a whole-school approach

- Social, emotional and physical development as well as academic achievement.
- Preventative mental health programmes in schools.
- Staff training.
- Programmes delivered in partnership with schools that help parents/carers.

Five-point plan

Widen our collective understanding of childhood trauma

- Cross-disciplinary framework and shared language on childhood trauma.
- Digital prevention and early intervention services.
- Training for the wider workforce.
- Cross-nation collaborations to collect and share best practice across the UK.

Leverage the power of science and data

- Standardise definitions and measurement
- Regular nationwide measurement
- Single point of access to mental health resources and services.
- Integration and sharing of digital information.



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“I think it just comes down to communication and wanting to understand.”



Em, Young Participation Programme Assistant

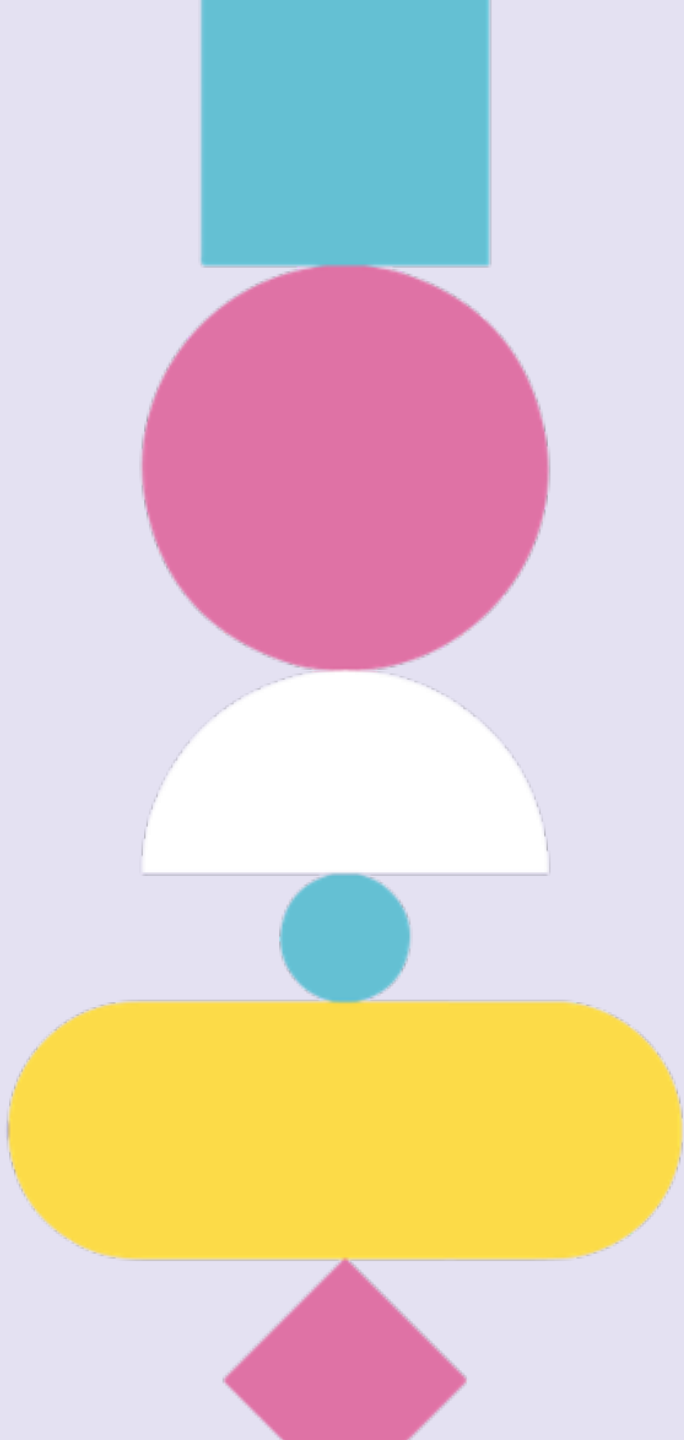
“Young people’s mental health is continually changing - each generation will experience things differently.”



Naz, Young Champion



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